

## Faith &amp; Inspiration

## Need to Lead

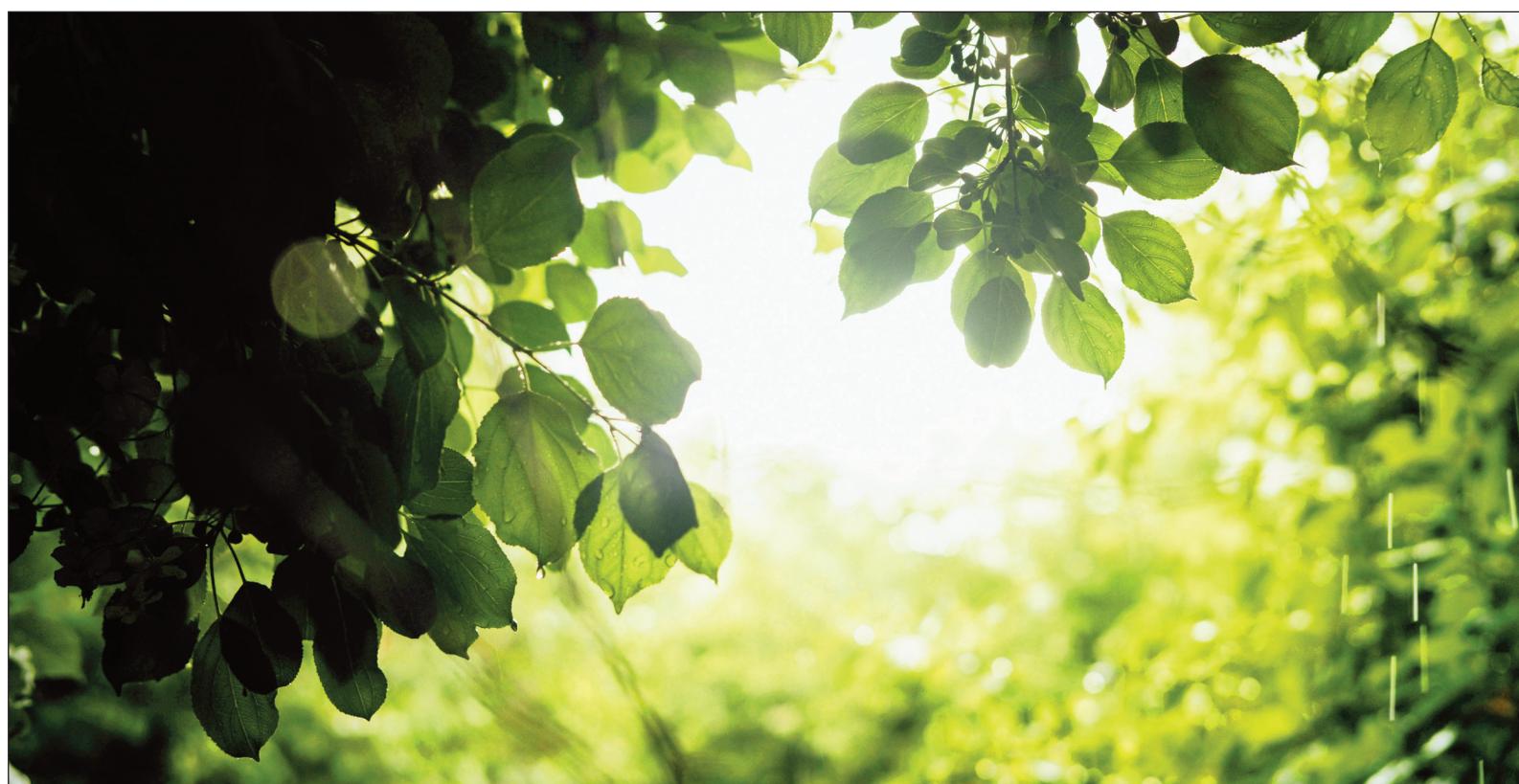


Photo by Tim Foster on Unsplash



By Vincent V. Marshburn -

Anyone who studies human thought and behavior on any level — psychological, emotional, spiritual, cultural, social — can readily deduce that we, as individuals and as a society, tend to benefit from good leadership. The Bible mentions that people left to their own devices may often fail to find direction or purpose and may even fail to survive as a people (Isaiah 53:6, Ezekiel 34:6, Proverbs 11:14). The letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament

explains that leaders should be of such character that we would strive to "imitate their faith" and would be willing to submit to their counsel (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Whether within nations or local organizations and assemblies, leaders are tasked with shouldering certain responsibilities of providing guidance and deliberation for the welfare and preservation of the integrity of that body. Leadership can sometimes be perceived as something to covet. It may be typical to observe the drive and pressure towards ambition for dominance and the desire for ascension above others. We are often encouraged — sometimes even coerced — to "climb the ladder" or seek "upward mobility" in corporate or social circles to obtain higher positions

that claim access to more power and wealth and influence.

Scripture presents an alternative and perhaps more subdued and sober perspective on the notion of what leadership ought to entail and what positions of responsibility ought to encompass. A variety of verses express God's exhortation and expectation for those who have been bestowed the blessing of supervising, instructing, or mentoring others. In the Old Testament, Moses was advised to identify individuals "who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe" to aid in governing the Israelites (Exodus 18:21).

The Gospels record Jesus's comparison and contrast between a worldly sense of sovereignty or authority and Godly leadership as a ministry within the Kingdom of Heaven

(Matthew 20:25-28, Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:24-27). Rather than the tendency to be domineering and autocratic in wielding apparent power over others, believers are called to humility and service, even as Jesus himself "came not to be served but to serve."

This spirit of servitude is reiterated throughout the New Testament. The Apostle Paul censures "selfish ambition or conceit" and emphasizes upholding others above oneself (Philippians 2:3). Likewise, the Apostle Peter disapproves of an overbearing approach and exhorts leaders to be "examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

At the same time, we are each called upon to exhibit leadership qualities when necessary. In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul indicates that being led

by the Holy Spirit to aspire to an "office of overseer" (which could refer to something similar to what we might identify as bishop, elder, or even pastor) amounts to seeking a "noble task" (1 Timothy 3:1).

So, while Scripture commands us in pursuing opportunities to lead through service, it cautions us to keep "envy and selfish ambition" in check (James 3:16). The world may characterize a disposition towards humility and a restraint of aggression or competitiveness as a lack of ambition or motivation. Such individuals may be perceived as failing to "fulfill potential" or as "stagnating." There are times, though, when the best interests of ourselves and those we serve are better supported by striving for contentment and excellence in our current position or rank.

In

the television series

"Star Trek: The Next Generation," Commander William Riker is the First Officer aboard the 25th-century starship USS Enterprise, second in command to Captain Jean-Luc Picard. Part of a first officer's duties

include

ensuring

the

captain's

commands

are

carried

out,

as

well

as

offering

alternative

options

and

insights

for

command

decisions.

Throughout

the

series,

Riker

exemplifies

the

best

qualities

of

an

effective

first

officer,

helping

to

keep

the

crew

in

peak

operating

form

and

stepping

in

when

necessary

to

assume

command

in

Picard's

absence.

In

the

third

season

finale

episode,

Starfleet

and

the

United

Federation

of

Planets

face

one

of

their

most

fearsome

recurring

enemies,

the

cybernetic

hive-mind

collective

known

as

the

Borg,

who

threaten

to

assimilate

the

worlds

of

the

Federation.

It

is

important

to

recognize

that

leadership

is

not

simply

a

matter

of

expecting

other

people

to

respond

to

one's

desires

or

whims.

It

is

not

even

a

matter

of

assuming

that

one's

own

perceptions

or

conclusions

always

represent

what

is

best

for

all

involved.

And

any

desire

for

leadership

is

certainly

not

intended

as

merely

a

desire

to

elevated

above

or

subjugate

others.

Sometimes,

good

leadership

is

understanding

that

one

is

especially

suited

for

one's

current

position

&lt;p